

ARTICLES OF UNDERSTANDING

ARTICLE 1 – NAME

The name of this body shall be the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Pastoral Council (“Council”).

ARTICLE 11 – PURPOSE

The Council exists to maintain and promote the vision of the Parish as defined in the Mission Statement and Detailed in the Reports and Recommendations of duly constituted Commissions and Committees.

The Council shall:

- Define the mission of the Parish,
- Discern the needs and concerns of the Parish community,
- Develop goals and priorities that address discerned needs and concerns and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and initiatives,
- Call all members of the Parish community to participate in the mission of the Parish,
- Support and encourage the pastoral staff, commissions and parish groups in carrying out their responsibilities in light of the Parish mission
- Take any action authorized under the Code of Canon Law, 1983 Ed., the ordinances of the Bishop of the Diocese of Lansing (“Bishop”) or any mandate from the Pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish (“Pastor”).

ARTICLE 111 – COMPETENCE

The Council is an advisory body to the Pastor in his administration of the Parish. The Council acts as a consultative body pursuant to the Code of Canon Law, see, Canon 536, and is governed by the norms determined by the Bishop.

Decisions of the Council take effect only when expressly ratified by the Pastor.

Such ratification cannot take place by his silence alone. If the Pastor chooses not to

follow the Council's recommendations, he will communicate his reasons for that decision. The Pastor may table a decision of the Council when he thinks a particular question needs further consideration either by himself or the entire Council.

ARTICLE 1V – MEMBERSHIP AND SELECTION

All baptized, confirmed, practicing and registered members of the Parish who are at least eighteen years of age are eligible to be members ("Members") of the Council.

The membership of the Council shall consist of the following:

- The Pastor, all other clergy assigned to the Parish, the Principal of the Parish School, the Director of Campus Ministry, and a representative of the Pastoral Team ex-officio.
- One representative of each duly constituted Parish Commission or group.
Such membership shall be determined by the membership of the Commission. The identified member shall serve one renewable three-year term to be affirmed annually by the Commission.

Duly constituted Parish Commissions are initially:

Adult Faith Formation and RCIA
Children's Religious Education and Youth Ministry
Finance and Administration
Stewardship and Development
Social Ministry
Student Ministry
Parish School
Worship and Music Ministry
Graduate Students and Young Professionals
MSU Catholic Faculty

ARTICLE V – RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Council members are expected to regularly attend Council meetings and to actively participate in its deliberations. It is the responsibility of each member to notify the Secretary of his/her inability to attend.

Normally the Council will conduct business on a consensus basis, but a vote may be taken in order to expedite such business. Each Council member has one vote including ex-officio members. Proxy votes are not accepted.

Council members shall seek the opinions of other parishioners whenever possible about matters to be discussed at the Council meetings. They shall also use every opportunity to be supportive of the Council's actions and decisions.

Council members shall assure that their actions and decisions are consistent with the Bishop's norms on Pastoral Councils and these Articles of Understanding.

Council members shall assure that all Parish Commissions, Councils Committees and groups carry out their charges in accordance with the Bishop's norms on Pastoral Councils and the stated mission of the Parish.

Council members are to take seriously Jesus' mandate to pray and especially pray for the good of the Parish and its Council.

ARTICLE VI – MEETINGS

The Council shall conduct a minimum of four (4) regular meetings per year and hold regular meetings more frequently pursuant to an annual schedule approved by the Council.

Notice of regular meetings shall be communicated to all parishioners through the Parish Bulletin (Connections).

Special meetings may be called by the Pastor, the Chairman of the Council or three other members. Notice of Council meetings shall be given for special meetings by the Secretary at least three (3) days prior to the meeting.

Council meetings shall begin and end with a prayer.

The Council may conduct its meetings in any manner that ensures that each Member is heard and that all votes of the Members are recorded. The Council may from time to time, review and alter its method of operation consistent with these Articles.

ARTICLE VII – OFFICERS

1. President – The Pastor shall be the President of the Council.
1. Chairman - A member shall be elected annually by the Council by a majority of Members appointed to the Council to, with the Pastor and one other Council member appointed by the Pastor prepare the agenda for and to preside over meetings of the Council.
1. Vice-Chairman – A Member shall be elected annually by the Council to fulfill the duties of the Chairman in the Chairman’s absence.
1. The Secretary shall be appointed by the Pastor to keep minutes, issue notices for all meetings of the Council, have charge of the permanent records, maintain a list of all Council Members and their terms of office and perform such other duties as the council may require.
1. The President, Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall constitute the Executive Committee.
1. The Pastor may appoint another Member to the Executive Committee.
1. The Pastor may call the Executive Committee to act on behalf of the Council between meetings in emergency situations when all the members are not available.

ARTICLE VIII – COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

The Council will work together with its various Commissions and Committees to bring to fruition those commitments set forth as goals by the Council through a cooperative process of discernment and consensus.

The Commissions establish action plans in their specific areas of competency to further the mission of the Parish. The Council provided oversight of and coordination among the Commissions. Each Commission is encouraged to establish Articles of Understanding and procedures for the effective achievement of those Commissions objectives and to evaluate their actions. Commissions are to make regular reports of their plans and actions to the Council. Actions taken by all Commissions are subject to approval and review by the Council. The Council reserves the right to alter, repeal or nullify any action plans proposed by the Commissions.

The Council may establish other Commissions/Committees.

ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENT TO THESE ARTICLES OF UNDERSTANDING

These Articles of Understanding shall become effective immediately upon approval by the Council and the approval of the Pastor. Proposed amendments to the Articles of Understanding shall be by written motion of any member upon at least fourteen (14) days notice.

ARTICLE X– DIOCESAN NORMS FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS.

The norms for Parish Pastoral Councils are to be faithfully adhered to in the actions of the Council. These norms are mandated by the universal law of the Church in Canon 536 #1, as well as by the Bishop of Lansing.